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DE RUEHBY #0535 1430738
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O 220738Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9612
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE PRIORITY 5280
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH PRIORITY 3562
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 3477

UNCLAS CANBERRA 000535

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND EAP/ANP
WHITE HOUSE FOR JULIE CRAMM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL KDEM KPAO CU AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA: REPORT ON MAY 21 - DAY OF SOLIDARITY
WITH THE CUBAN PEOPLE

REF: A. CANBERRA 508

- IB. STATE 51536
- IC. HARKER-JACKSON TELECON OF MAY 16
- ID. STATE 46997
- IE. STATE 45792
- IF. CANBERRA 452

I1. (U) As requested Ref B, post hereby furnishes the following report on activities undertaken by the U.S. Mission to observe May 21 - Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People.

I2. (SBU) Parliamentary Outreach: Michael Danby, a prominent Member of Parliament, distributed the following statement to other members of Parliament, along with copies of the Cuba report in the U.S. Department of State's 2007 Human Rights Report and the Freedom House Country Reports for 2007:

Begin text:

Dear Colleagues

Today, May 21, marks Cuban Solidarity Day. The date is linked to the anniversary of the death of Pedro Luis Boitel, a poet and activist, who died while on a hunger strike in a Cuban jail in 1972.

The purpose of this event is to promote peaceful democratic change in Cuba, by demonstrating broad and robust support for the Cuban people, and to reflect on the plight of prisoners of conscience and the dearth of civil and political freedoms within that state. Attached you'll find a 2007 human rights report from the U.S. Department of State, as well as a human rights report from Freedom House, also on the human rights situation in Cuba.

I encourage you as members of this Parliamentary Friendship Group to mark today by demonstrating your support for ordinary Cubans, by visiting www.solidaridadcuba.org to find out more information about Cuban Solidarity Day or through signing a petition for the release of Cuba's political prisoners at www.peticioncuba.org.

Kind regards

Michael Danby MHR
Chair, Australia-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship Group

End text.

(Note: Mr. Danby had also volunteered to draft an op-ed for the Financial Review, but the newspaper had not published any

Cuba-related item as of COB May 22. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) Outreach to the Cuban community: CG Sydney hosted a coffee for prominent author and Cuban exile Luis Garcia on the morning of May 22. Garcia, whose parents sought political asylum in Spain and then migrated to Australia in the 1960's, was familiar with President Bush's gesture in proclaiming May 21 a Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People, and commended the United States commitment to principles of democracy and freedom.

¶4. (U) U.S. Mission Webpages: The webpages for the U.S. Embassy and Consulate Generals (CG) Melbourne, Perth and Sydney prominently featured a Solidarity Day article, along with background information and the President's May 21 proclamation and his remarks to the media on the occasion.

¶5. (U) Local media coverage: Despite aggressive attempts by the Embassy and CGs to place the Solidarity Day op-ed in prominent papers in Australia, including the Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian, The Melbourne Age, and the Canberra Times, no papers have picked up the item to date.

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